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EXECUTIVE BOARD

1991 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 22 April 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. PALME (Sweden)

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

OPENING STATEMENTS OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

1. The CHAIRMAN opened the session.

2. She then made a general survey. Since the last regular session, the world had again gone through dark times. The situation in the Persian Gulf had preoccupied much of the world for the past nine months, and it had caused - and continued to cause - much suffering to civilian populations, especially children. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was involved in the concerted efforts of the United Nations system to alleviate that suffering. Unless humankind renounced armed conflicts, coming generations would compromise hope for a better world for children. That hope must be based on concrete action for the survival, development and protection of children and, if necessary, their recovery and social reintegration, as explicitly stipulated in article 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention, together with the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s and the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children, constituted the legal, moral and political instruments for attaining that goal.

3. African children - both boys and girls - deserved special attention. Already the poorest of continents a decade ago, Africa had registered a further 20 per cent drop in its per capita income in its sub-Saharan region. In southern Africa, apartheid had wrecked development efforts. In many countries, unfavourable terms of trade and debt-serving were aggravating already precarious conditions. Africa, which had the world's fastest population growth and was increasingly stricken by drought and shaken by civil unrest, was very far from achieving the goals which it had set for itself. Children were the first victims of that situation which, in many countries, was further imperilled by the ravages of AIDS and insufficient resources for providing adequate nutrition and education. Those numerous obstacles could be overcome only through effective cooperation among the African countries themselves, donor agencies and international and non-governmental organizations. In that regard, she welcomed the presence, for the first time, of an independent Namibia at the current session of the Executive Board.

4. The entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child less than one year after its adoption had been a very positive development. Far from being a dream as some people had claimed, the Convention, to which 77 States had already acceded, was the fruit of a vision without which mankind was lost. The Executive Board must define the role of UNICEF in the efforts to make the Convention a reality. The World Summit for Children, whose Declaration had been signed by over 100 countries, had also been a success. As part of the follow-up activities, the Executive Board should consider how to make the most of that remarkable opportunity. The solemn commitments which had been made should be a continuing source of inspiration for action at all

(The Chairman)

levels in favour of all children. In 1990, the goals of the universal child immunization programme had been achieved, and immunization rates had risen from less than 20 per cent in 1981 to around 80 per cent in 1990; that was perhaps the most remarkable success of all. Much, of course, remained to be done but, overall, a very firm base had been laid for sustainability of mother and child health and, in particular, for combating acute respiratory infections, malaria, AIDS, maternal mortality and malnutrition. Her visit to Latin America earlier in the year had made her aware of the interest of the countries of the region in the basic services which UNICEF emphasized.

5. With respect to the Fund's budget, which would be examined at the current session, there was a need for a much better balance of contributions. The major donors must be joined by a greater number of richer nations in order to ensure a more equitable sharing of the costs and to provide UNICEF with a more solid base for financing its activities.

6. Children were human beings at the very height of their physical and psychological development. Children could not wait; the worst crime was to abandon them.

7. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund) said that 1990 had been a historic year for children, full of promise and real achievements. First, the Convention on the Rights of the Child had entered into force in September 1990, only a few months after it had been opened for signature. The Convention, which had already become the law of the land in 77 countries and would soon be applicable in most of the others, had also served as the basis for a common strategy for securing basic education for all by the year 2000. The World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, March 1990) had been for education what the Alma Ata Conference had been for primary health care. Moreover, at its 1990 session, the Executive Board had identified ambitious but nevertheless realistic goals and strategies for the next 10 years, which had been widely accepted and had served as a basis for consensus at the World Summit for Children held a few months later. The needs of children had been discussed at the highest possible level and had been brought to the attention of the whole world. The Summit's World Declaration and Plan of Action set very specific goals, many with measurable targets and deadlines for their achievement, and provided for follow-up measures at the national and international levels. The universal child immunization programme, which was the largest peace-time collaborative effort, had made it possible to protect 80 per cent of the world's children from diseases which were preventable by vaccination (and, in particular, to save the lives of some 3 million children each year), to establish an infrastructure capable of sustaining immunization and providing a base for other advances in general health, and to demonstrate that, given the right conditions, ambitious goals could be achieved. Moreover, development planning had turned decidedly towards the human dimension, which was in keeping with the concerns of the Fund for adjustment with a human face. The year 1990 had also witnessed the end of the cold war, which had opened the way to innovative approaches to world problems. It was to be hoped that the Gulf war tragedy had been only an isolated aberration in the current climate of détente.

(Mr. Grant)

8. During the decade ahead, which was full of promise for children, UNICEF would have to fulfil, as effectively as possible, the multiple functions required by the different areas of activity to which he had referred in his report (E/ICEF/1991/2 (Part II)), by relying on its considerable experience, its vast network of alliances and its capacity to mobilize goodwill everywhere. In the 1980s, the Fund had sought to sharpen and strengthen its field work. Its current goal, however, no longer was to broaden its activities but to help countries implement the goals and strategies which the Executive Board had established in 1990.

9. The Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children was an unprecedentedly detailed framework, which had been endorsed at the highest level; it gave children absolute priority with respect to resource allocation and set quantifiable goals to be accomplished within concrete time-frames. It was applicable to all children without exception and it called upon all segments of society to participate. The Plan also established a global monitoring process and urged countries to make the necessary resources available. The United Nations had pledged its full support in helping countries fulfil the commitments of the World Summit for Children, commitments to which the General Assembly had drawn attention in its resolution 45/217. The executive heads of all relevant agencies seemed to consider the Plan of Action as an effective way of strengthening and extending organizational programmes affecting the condition of children (the Fund's own programme of action was contained in document E/ICEF/1991/12). All resident coordinators of the United Nations system had been asked to examine how the activities of the respective organizations could be used to reinforce national strategies.

10. First of all, UNICEF should consider how to strengthen its activities at the country level. For that the Fund would have to strengthen both its field offices - by taking measures in the areas of personnel (staff and training), procurement (methods and quality) and exchange of information, and by improving cooperation with other organizations, strengthening inter-agency collaboration mechanisms, accelerating of applied research, developing more explicit strategies in certain areas and making use of various mechanisms to facilitate and speed up programme implementation - and support capacity at headquarters. As the Board of Auditors had indicated in its report on UNICEF for the biennium ending 31 December 1989 (A/45/5/Add.2), UNICEF did not have at headquarters the support staff required to ensure effective implementation of substantive policies and programmes; that situation was likely to become even worse in the 1990s. Although the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) considered that UNICEF headquarters staff had been growing disproportionately in numbers and grade level as compared with the growth of staff in the field, that conclusion had not been corroborated by the findings of the Board of Auditors or by the figures themselves. The number of field posts had increased 61 per cent since 1982 and should increase another 10 per cent by 1993, while support capacity at headquarters had grown at the far slower rate of 23 per cent annually.

(Mr. Grant)

11. The budget proposals for 1992-1993 reflected the need for a modest strengthening of headquarters capacity. The goal was to balance programme and budgetary expenditure within a realistic income scenario to ensure adequate future liquidity provisions and an average annual growth rate for general resources programme expenditures that outpaced the growth of the administrative budget. It was necessary to be concerned whether the Fund's anticipated increase in income, which was entirely dependent on voluntary contributions, would materialize over the budget period through 1993. The medium-term plan projected an average growth of total income of 5.2 per cent annually for the period 1991-1994, well below the average for the past 10 years. However, income in 1990 had increased far more rapidly than projected (22 per cent), particularly as a result of private sector fund-raising and the very good results from the Fund's greeting cards operation. The Executive Board could therefore expect that UNICEF projected income in the coming budgetary period would materialize.

12. It would be heldpful if the Board provided comments and guidance on a number of important issues: how to sustain the success of universal child immunization; how to come up with $20 million in additional resources which would be needed annually by 1995 to achieve the goals for the 1990s; the very special priority for Africa, which faced increasingly serious problems, in particular AIDS; and the continuing burden of debt in Africa and much of Latin America.

13. In emergency situations, UNICEF worked closely with the World Food Programme (WFP), with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and with the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO). There was increasing demand on UNICEF, as indicated by the results of its emergency appeals for funds; that was due to the growing acceptance that assistance should reach vulnerable groups trapped in conflict areas. UNICEF was actively supporting United Nations efforts to assist Iraqi refugees. Significant parts of Africa were currently facing disaster on a scale comparable to that of 1984-1985, and the Executive Board would have to provide advice and guidance in that area as well.

14. UNICEF was at a crucial period in its history. It had amply demonstrated its competence and enjoyed the support of the public and of Governments of virtually all nations; its objectives were clearly defined and the world political climate was very conducive to constructive action. Perhaps some had accused it of too ambitious goals and of having created unrealizable expectations. That was not the case, since the 3.5 million children whose lives had been saved in 1990 alone were proof of that fact. There was no need to be afraid of having high expectations as long as sustained efforts were made to fulfil them.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

15. The agenda was adopted.

16. The CHAIRMAN said that the deadline for submission of draft proposals emanating from the general debate was 6 p.m. on Wednesday, 24 April. Draft proposals emanating from the Programme Committee and, to the extent possible, from the Committee on Administration and Finance, should be submitted within 24 hours of the introduction of the relevant agenda item. She also gave a number of instructions regarding the organization of work and drew attention to the two events which UNICEF had organized in connection with the session.

17. Mr. WILLIAMS (Secretary of the Executive Board) announced the schedule of informal meetings for the current session.

GENERAL DEBATE

18. Mr. RANSOME-KUTI (Nigeria) said that Nigeria was continuing to take resolute steps to ensure the survival, protection and development of Nigerian children. It had made considerable progress towards establishing a national primary health system which provided a range of integrated health services. Its decentralization policy was aimed at transferring the responsibility for providing such services to the local authorities. In 1991, all administrative divisions would develop their own primary health care networks. The Bamako Initiative was now better understood and accepted by the international community. In Nigeria, the Initiative had helped restore public confidence in the health services and strengthen the capacity of communities to manage and finance health systems at the district or village level.

19. Over 80 per cent of Nigerian children had received the anti-tuberculosis vaccine (BCG), the diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus vaccine (DPT3) and the poliomyelitis vaccine (POLIO3), and 73.3 per cent of pregnant women had been vaccinated against tetanus. However, the success of child survival programmes would result in a population explosion whose effects would have to be attenuated by the immediate implementation of effective family planning programmes.

20. He welcomed the emphasis accorded to women's health issues by UNICEF. WHO had estimated that nearly 500,000 died yearly world-wide from complications of childbirth and pregnancy. Those appalling figures reflected the low status of women in society. The biological, social, economic, cultural and other factors affecting women's health must be aggressively addressed; and gender inequality with regard to education, care and feeding must be combated. Nigeria had already taken steps to enhance the status of women, particularly in rural areas, and was currently considering legislation to raise the marriage age of girls to 18 years as well as measures to provide incentives to keep women in school up to that age.

21. The efforts in the area of rural water supply were beginning to yield tangible results and should make it possible to eradicate guinea-worm disease by 1995. In view of the spread of AIDS, his delegation noted with satisfaction the increased cooperation between WHO and UNICEF to combat the disease which, according to WHO estimates, had already struck 500,000 children

(Mr. Ransome-Kuti, Nigeria)

under 5 years of age in Africa. He also admired the skill and speed with which UNICEF had responded to emergency situations: Operation Lifeline Sudan was an example of that. Furthermore, he welcomed the crusade by UNICEF for debt relief for poor countries and its advocacy of adjustment with a human face.

22. As the Executive Director had stated, the international community would have a unique opportunity in the 1990s, thanks to new and more effective health technologies and the organization of health services, to combat diseases. He hoped that that progress would enable the agencies concerned to tackle health problems in a concerted, coordinated and integrated manner.

23. Mr. ELIASSON (Sweden) said that 1990, which had been marked by the World Summit for Children, the adoption of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, had been a year of many promises for children. Constant efforts would be necessary, however, to keep those promises in spite of often adverse conditions - natural disasters, environmental degradation and the spread of AIDS, for example. Children were often the first victims of those tragedies.

24. An international consensus was gradually emerging on how to meet development challenges. In an increasingly interdependent world, the international community had the responsibility to enhance support for national efforts. The United Nations system had an important role to play in all aspects of development - human resources development, national responsibility and capacity-building, sustainable development and so forth. UNICEF had been particularly active in working closely with Governments, community leaders and non-governmental organizations. That cooperation was the key to success.

25. The Plan of Action for implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children set forth a set of specific goals and clear guidelines. In order to implement the Declaration and Plan of Action, UNICEF must endeavour above all strengthen and accelerate its traditional programme activities, essentially playing a supportive and catalytic role since the Plan of Action also required cooperation by other United Nations agencies and strong international support. In that connection, Sweden urged other donor countries to intensify their efforts to allocate 0.7 per cent of their GNP to official development assistance. If that agreed objective was achieved, an additional $50 billion would be released every year and the Fund's budget would be virtually doubled.

26. A comprehensive approach, integrated programmes for primary health care, and activities in the field of education were crucial factors for any successful strategy for child survival and development. To achieve those objectives, UNICEF must make optimal use of its resources; in other words, it must cooperate closely with other United Nations agencies. Together with WHO and UNESCO, the Fund had for a long time been stressing the importance of social indicators, such as infant mortality rates, nutritional levels,

(Mr. Eliasson, Sweden)

immunization coverage, school enrolments and literacy rates. The assistance provided by UNICEF to Governments in establishing those indicators had been essential. Furthermore, its increased cooperation with UNFPA in family planning and WHO/UNDP in combating AIDS was indeed welcome.

27. Inter-agency cooperation had become a key element in responding to increasingly complex emergency situations, of which the refugee situation in Iraq and that of the drought victims in Africa were tragic examples. The United Nations system, however, had not always proved to be an effective instrument and improvements were still called for. The recent adjustments made by UNICEF to streamline and improve its activities were therefore encouraging.

28. UNICEF had often been innovative in reaching children in emergencies caused by armed conflict; the "corridors of peace" in the Sudan and the "days of tranquillity" in El Salvador were examples to be followed. Furthermore, far too many children lived in urban slums and were the victims of abuse, neglected, or forced into labour and prostitution. Speedy action was necessary to facilitate their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration, as article 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child rightly stipulated.

29. Children, who were the future of mankind, must be at the top of the international community's agenda. Mankind must learn from history in order to build a satisfactory common future.

30. Mr. TRAXLER (Italy) said that his Government had played a very active role at the World Summit for Children, for which it had been the third major financial contributor. In general, the entire Italian society made an effective contribution to initiatives for the benefit of children. He paid tribute in that regard to Mr. Aldo Farina, Chairman of the Italian National Committee, who had devoted his life to the welfare of children and whose dedication had been decisive in gaining public support for UNICEF.

31. In the past decade, Italy had become the third donor to the Fund's general resources. It had continued to increase considerably its contributions in spite of severe budgetary restrictions which had forced it to reduce its contributions to other agencies. Italy hoped to be able to maintain its contribution level, subject to an annual review of UNICEF activities, which must justify the effort undertaken. The issue of resources was essential: needs were enormous and resources scarce. The Fund could not always count on the same small group of donors and must increase its efforts to find other fund contributors. Nevertheless, since it could hardly expect a dramatic increase in its funds, UNICEF must have a realistic budget and use it in the most effective manner.

32. That required genuine coordination among the various agencies, particularly a rational distribution of tasks within the United Nations

(Mr. Traxler, Italy)

system; and the cross-sectoral activities of UNICEF should be harmonized with those of other organizations having primary responsibilities in the same areas. The Fund should also establish a clearer and more realistic set of priorities. His Government, for its part, had already taken measures at the national level for the implementation of article 34 of the Plan of Action. At the international level, it would place even more emphasis on child welfare by strengthening the provisions specifically aimed at improving the situation of the most vulnerable groups in developing countries, for example through its PRODERE programme, devoted to refugees in Central America, and its project to help street children being carried out in Argentina.

33. Lastly, UNICEF should remain primarily a development organization devoted to programme delivery, with clear and relevant strategies. Although advocacy, information and mobilization were important activities, they must be instrumental to that end. That was the background against which the Government of Italy would assess the quality of the Fund's work, which should be planned and evaluated according to a few clear criteria: contribution to national capacity-building; technical and financial sustainability of projects, decentralization of basic services, participation of local communities, including non-governmental organizations; and emphasis on training at all levels. Those key criteria were also at the core of major General Assembly resolutions, particularly the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation. UNICEF should devote less effort and fewer resources to promotional activities and should do much more to enhance the quality of aid and its effective absorption by the recipient countries. The Board had approved a number of goals and strategies in 1990 and the World Summit for Children had adopted a fundamental Plan of Action. The secretariat should now devote its resources primarily to the effective implementation of those measures in the field.

34. UNICEF activities in support of child protection and development in Central and Eastern Europe, where conditions affecting children were very difficult in some areas, were another important problem. The small unit which dealt with that region had been set up only very recently and no one as yet had a clear picture of the situation, or a strategy or plan of action. The first priority should be to send missions to those countries where there seemed to be the greatest need, including Albania, and make a proper assessment of actual requirements and possible emergency measures so that the Board could then be in a position to envisage a clear course of action.

35. He stressed once again the fundamental importance of coordinating emergency assistance within the United Nations. Italy had noted, particularly in the case of Africa and the Gulf, that UNICEF had acted without taking account of concurrent interventions by other agencies and bilateral donors. That had impaired effectiveness and had led to negative financial consequences; thus, Italy was seriously concerned about the high level of the unfunded balance of UNICEF emergency initiatives. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation was entitled to play a

(Mr. Traxler, Italy)

coordinating role in emergency operations. All requirements for funding should be submitted by the Secretary-General and coordinated by the Director-General. Specific coordinating tasks should be entrusted by the Secretary-General to a lead agency for each specific situation.

36. More generally, inter-agency cooperation was essential for the smooth and effective functioning of the United Nations system since programme activities were increasingly cross-sectoral and drew upon the competence of several organizations. His delegation therefore had noted with interest the aide-mémoire on African health, signed on 16 January 1991 by UNICEF and the World Bank. The United Nations system already had a broad range of guiding principles, as set out, in particular, in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. That document and General Assembly resolution 44/211 should serve as the basis for work by UNICEF and the other agencies, under the leadership of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation.

37. Lastly, the budget should be carefully reviewed. As the resources entrusted to UNICEF increased, the budget must be given to greater scrutiny. There was a need for a substantial change in the way in which the budget was submitted to the Board and the manner in which the Board examined and approved its provisions. The time had come for the Board to exercise its budgetary prerogatives more strictly by giving greater guidance and requiring a higher level of accountability on the part of the secretariat.

38. Mr. MONTAÑO (Mexico) said that, after the profound changes that had taken place on the international political scene, one might hope to see greater international cooperation and the establishment of a "new order", which must of necessity lead to the elimination of inequalities and the correction of imbalances. Nevertheless, one might also fear that the break with the past was only partial and that most of the developing world remained immersed in the economic and social crisis. That was the case with regard to most of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. In spite of all the efforts to promote recovery, poverty was spreading and women and children were among the most affected.

39. After the World Summit for Children, which the current Mexican Government had called for, it was necessary to concretize at the national and international levels the commitments undertaken in order to ensure that justice and development were realities in the world of tomorrow. Mexico, for its part, oriented its activities concerning children, women and youth in a direction that was totally in keeping with the priorities of the Plan of Action adopted at the Summit and fully integrated UNICEF in them. The Government had already organized the first national meeting to assess and follow up the World Summit, reaffirming its firm resolve to improve the living conditions of children, even if it had to overcome very complex problems in order to do so, and strengthening its social protection activities to benefit that group. A second meeting would be held in the near future in order to

(Mr. Montaño, Mexico)

draw up a national programme on health, education, food, and water and sanitation. It should also be pointed out that Mexico had been at the forefront of efforts to assist children living in particularly difficult conditions - the victims of poverty and violence, the children of uprooted parents, street children exposed to all types of dangers - who until then had been the forgotten group in the development process.

40. The budget was one of the most important questions at the current session. While donors had considerably increased their contributions, steps should be taken to ensure that those funds were put to best use. UNICEF should focus its activities as a matter of priority on developing countries and, after an in-depth analysis, the modalities and limits of the Fund's cooperation with countries that did not belong to that category should then be determined.

41. The conflict in the Persian Gulf had had an impact on many countries. The main victims of the conflict were children. Only several months after solemn commitments had been undertaken at the World Summit, the Organization was unable to provide them with the humanitarian assistance that they urgently needed. That failure to act, which had further increased the number of victims, made one wonder about the ability of the United Nations to adapt to the pressure of circumstances in order to provide humanitarian assistance. The role of the various international agencies that had the task of providing assistance should be reviewed very carefully because mere rhetoric and good intentions did not suffice in emergency situations. In conditions where planning was often impossible, there was a need for flexible structures which were supported by sufficient resources and could focus and coordinate efforts. In all emergency situations - that in the Middle East was but one of many - it would be necessary in the future to take steps to ensure not only the financing, but also the speediness of interventions.

42. Mr. DAUFRESNE de la CHEVALERIE (France) noted with satisfaction that the World Summit for Children had laid down precise guidelines and put forward concrete proposals. There was now a need to ensure that the commitments undertaken at the Summit were fulfilled. UNICEF could rely on France, where various initiatives for the benefit of children were being carried out. Accordingly, the International Child Centre, which had already sponsored a world round-table discussion with UNICEF in March 1989, had recently organized a seminar on the status of children in the French legal system. It had also organized a number of other activities as part of the Bamako Initiative, including two meetings on essential medical supplies in developing countries. The French UNICEF Committee, which was also very active, was endeavouring to promote awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in schools. Furthermore, in response to the wishes of the Prime Minister, a committee would be set up in the near future in order to follow up the Summit: that national structure for reflection and coordination would be given the task of implementing the Plan of Action in France.

(Mr. Daufresne de la Chevalerie, France)

43. In view of the increasing demands, UNICEF must be pragmatic and effective and must sometimes orient its activities within the general framework of assistance to disaster-stricken population groups, by linking them of necessity to those of other organizations that pursued humanitarian objectives. The Fund had carried out remarkable work in Liberia, Kuwait, Iraq and among the Kurdish population groups. Nevertheless, perfect coordination between the various assistance agencies was still necessary. For that reason, UNICEF should be better represented among the other humanitarian organizations in Geneva. It would therefore be to the Fund's advantage, for example with regard to emergency assistance, to have a decentralized structure with the necessary authority to enable it to carry out its role.

44. However, the needs of emergency operations should not distract UNICEF from its primary mission: long-term efforts in the field. While highly encouraging results had been achieved with regard to immunization coverage, child health, nutrition and sanitation, it should none the less be recognized that, in many countries, health indicators had declined and health services had deteriorated. Those who suffered as a result were the most vulnerable groups, especially children. UNICEF activities should take place within a time-frame which would ensure that they were sufficiently cost-effective, even at the expense of the main vertical programmes, which were often over-ambitious in relation to the meagre benefits which target populations derived from them. His delegation had therefore noted with great satisfaction that there was a real desire to strengthen, or at least to maintain, the results of ongoing projects, particularly those of the universal immunization programme.

45. budgetary discipline and effective management were more necessary than ever, in order to enable UNICEF to continue its efforts on behalf of countries which were most in need, particularly in Africa. The strengthening of UNICEF financial management appeared to be conducive to that objective. In responding to the new requests for assistance, UNICEF must not dissipate its efforts and financial resources, but should concentrate on its mandate, namely, efforts on behalf of the developing countries.

46. UNICEF was perhaps not the most appropriate forum for discussion of the debt problem. The heavily indebted countries had obtained significant relief by addressing themselves to the bodies which were truly competent in that area, namely, the Paris Club, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. However, it was indeed essential to take into account the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. As expressly stated therein, "The ... UNICEF goals and strategies for the 1990s should serve as important priority guidelines", since the countries concerned believed that any measures of social and economic development which they might adopt would remain to a great extent ineffective without improvements in the health standards of their populations. It would therefore be necessary to reconcile the needs of the Programme of Action with those of the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children, so that UNICEF could give priority to the least developed countries.

(Mr. Daufresne de la Chevalerie, France)

47. There were already signs that the next 10 years would be extremely difficult. While UNICEF needed to re-evaluate a number of posts in order to meet that challenge, it must at the same time strengthen its efforts in the field. Furthermore, UNICEF should seek increased exchanges and closer relations with all agencies carrying out similar activities. Organizations such as the International Children's Centre in France and the National Committees for UNICEF, which contributed to UNICEF funding and constituted a remarkable network for influencing national authorities and public opinion, were valuable partners. The French National Committee for UNICEF, for instance, had raised $22 million in 1990 through a public campaign.

48. Mrs. PAZ-ZAMORA (Bolivia) said that her country had recently signed the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children, and was in the process of setting up a high-level national commission which would be responsible for drawing up, by the end of 1991, a plan of action focusing on immunization, the promotion of breast-feeding and the control of iodine deficiency disorders. Furthermore, a national plan was being carried out to improve children's chances for survival and development, as well as maternal health; it, too, was in line with the objectives outlined at the Summit. Note should also be taken of the work of the National Commission on Solidarity and Social Development, which was mainly responsible for implementing the country's social development policy concerning minors, the elderly, social programmes in the urban environment and disadvantaged areas. Lastly, all sectors of Bolivian society were taking part in the efforts to protect children.

49. Bolivia, which had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, would shortly adopt a new code to protect minors, together with various other legal instruments and a set of practical measures. In dealing with children and youth, priority was given to preventive efforts, such as reintegrating them into their families and communities, in accordance with the Convention and the principles laid down at the World Summit, rather than placing them in special institutions. Immunization was one of the country's main priorities. Although the objective of 80 per cent coverage which had been fixed for 1990 had not been achieved, major progress had nevertheless been made in the past five years through a series of intensive campaigns. Bolivia was aware that improving the status of women would automatically improve that of children and families and social conditions in general, and had decided to promote the integration of women into social development. It had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1989, and was planning to introduce a set of measures which would enable women to take part in public affairs.

50. Bolivia was grateful for the assistance provided to it by UNICEF, which was receptive to its needs and evaluated them objectively. With regard to the UNICEF budget, there should be no dichotomy between headquarters and the field offices, which together formed a unit to assist children; it was merely

(Mrs. Paz-Zamora, Bolivia)

necessary to strengthen their respective means of action. The function of headquarters was to provide the best possible support to the field offices so that they, in turn, could assist countries in their efforts. It was necessary to find the right balance between the two components, without separating them.

51. It was to be hoped that a way could be found, through the technical and administrative mechanisms of UNICEF, to increase the funds allocated to countries which, like Bolivia, had the greatest needs. Donor countries should also take immediate action to provide the amount of $16 million which was still outstanding for the period 1989-1993.

52. Bolivia had undertaken a stringent adjustment programme which had already produced excellent results, but it remained one of the poorest countries and was sinking under its burden of external debt, which fell most heavily on the poorest sectors of the population. Her country had decided to invest public funds first and foremost in building up its "human capital", through efforts to meet the basic needs of rural areas, to fight poverty and to integrate women into the development process. To do that, however, it was critically in need of international assistance in the form of investment aid and technical assistance. That was essential in order to enable Bolivia to pursue its structural adjustment and thereby to achieve a quality of growth which would have an especially beneficial impact on children. Children should not be considered in isolation, as a mere programme element; they were vital to society and should be central to development policies.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

EXECUTIVE BOARD

1991 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 22 April 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Ms. PALME (Sweden)

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General debate (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent to Ms. M. A. Cuna, Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board, room H-12K, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mrs. BADRAN (Egypt) said that the report of the Executive Director (E/ICEF/1991/2 (Parts I and II and Part II/Add.1) showed that the needs of children in Africa far exceeded the capabilities of the countries of the region, no matter how responsible their leadership. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) should therefore continue to give high priority to Africa in its budget and programming. The Bamako Initiative (E/ICEF/1991/L.6) should be fully funded. Women, however, had to be involved in its planning and decision-making phases, where they were currently regrettably underrepresented. The progress report on achievements made in the implementation of UNICEF policy on women in development (E/ICEF/1991/L.5) indicated that health programmes were fragmented and that the approach most of them took to maternal mortality and safe motherhood was too narrow. Thus, even as beneficiaries of UNICEF programmes, women found themselves in a deteriorating situation. UNICEF should hold firmly to a policy of recruiting women with technical expertise to regional and country offices. While UNICEF had, according to the Executive Director's report (E/ICEF/1991/2 (Part II), para. 166), commendably attained its target of having one half of its core Professional posts occupied by women, her delegation would like to know what proportion of third-world women held posts and at what levels.

2. Egypt concurred with the priority to be given to basic education and especially the education of girls, and supported the recommendations of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education contained in document E/ICEF/1991/L.13. However, only a tiny part of the UNICEF budget had been set aside for educational programmes, and the allocations for the Middle East and Africa - less than 5 per cent of the budget in both cases - were less than half those for Latin America and Asia. Those allocations should be revised to give a more equitable share to Africa and the Middle East.

3. Having reviewed the budget estimates in document E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.1 and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on those estimates (E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.10), Egypt supported the Committee's contention that UNICEF programme delivery should be improved, in order for it to become a truly effective agency, free from bureaucracy.

4. The Gulf crisis had had extremely adverse effects on the third world and on children and mothers in the Arab world in particular. UNICEF should work with all the countries involved, through all relevant programmes, to mitigate those effects. On the other hand, the crisis had created an awareness that genuine action lay in sustainable development based on democracy, which itself rested on full and adequate human development, beginning in childhood. Because of that awareness, Egypt had begun making strides in implementing the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children and had enhanced the role of

(Mrs. Badran, Egypt)

its National Council for Maternity, which coordinated the efforts of the various Egyptian bodies involved in child welfare, such as the Ministries of Health, Education, Social Affairs, Information, Culture and Labour. The Council was taking a modern approach to its work that reduced expenditures. It had laid down a national policy for mothers and children in coordination with the relevant ministries and with international agencies that included UNICEF, UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as non-governmental organizations. The Council hoped that it could count on UNICEF support for its activities and policy planning.

5. Mr. VIQUEIRA (Spain) said that the 1990s had begun well, with increased international attention focused on the world of children. Unquestionably, UNICEF's own efforts to ensure the survival, protection and development of children and its social mobilization to that end had been decisive, earning it his own Government's highest decoration for meritorious social action.

6. A further task now facing UNICEF was to ensure the universal implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. State parties would of course implement the Convention differently, depending on their social, economic and legal system, yet all would be aiming to meet at least the same minimum standards. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, established under the Convention, would have his Government's full support. The Convention had entered into force in Spain in January 1991. As one of the architects of the Convention, Spain had not wished to enter reservations at the time of its ratification, but had made two interpretative declarations. In the first, Spain interpreted article 21 (d) of the Convention as meaning that intercountry adoption could never result in financial gain other than that needed to cover strictly necessary costs; in the second, Spain disagreed with the age limit set in article 38 (2) and (3) of the Convention, on the grounds that 15 years was too young.

7. In view of its new obligations under the Convention, Spain had begun work on a National Bill on the Rights of the Child, taking as its starting-point the concept of the child as a subject of law and adapting the principles of the Convention to the specific economic and social situation in Spain. His Government felt that regional instruments supplementing the Convention would be desirable as well.

8. In Spain, exhibitions and publications on the rights of the child had already been launched and a media campaign was under way, focusing on the child's two basic needs: protection and autonomy. The campaign's specific objectives were to promote responsibility in adults so that children could exercise their rights, not to minimize the difficulties facing adults in understanding and satisfying children's needs and to give credence to the idea that there were no perfect parents. The central message was that adults must learn to listen to what children had to say, so that they could help them play an active role in their environment and hence develop and grow in positive ways.

(Mr. Vigueira, Spain)

9. The commitments made by countries at the World Summit for Children were based on solidarity among States. His own Government had set up an interdepartmental commission to draw up guidelines for action throughout the decade, including cooperation with UNICEF programmes. At the same time, it had promulgated a law reforming the educational system, by which compulsory schooling had been extended to the age of 16 and the concept of pre-school education had been recognized.

10. Looking to the future, the international community must fulfil the pledges it had made to children in 1990, and UNICEF in particular must cooperate still more closely with other agencies of the United Nations system in using available funds as effectively as possible. The problems of the child must be seen as interrelated with development strategies and programmes involving other agencies. The important role assigned to UNICEF in implementing the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit required the active cooperation of the developed countries, but also an adequate effort by the developing countries to make the most of any assistance received and to adopt appropriate national policies.

11. Welcome advances had been made in universal child immunization (UCI), but those countries where the targets had not been met should give priority to expanding participation and access to basic services.

12. His Government was especially concerned about the participation of women in development and had, since 1988, undertaken various activities to promote equal opportunities for women. With that same end in view, it was working with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) on technical cooperation programmes with Latin America.

13. UNICEF should give priority to its programmes in Latin America, and especially to those being implemented in Africa through the Bamako Initiative. Children in especially difficult circumstances, such as Kurdish or Palestinian children and all those affected by the Gulf war, also required particular protection.

14. Ms. POULSEN (Denmark) said that while the World Summit for Children had been an impressive gathering of world leaders, reflecting a new focus on human values and human rights in all stages of life, starting with childhood, good intentions were not enough. If the United Nations was to make its proper contribution to development in general and child welfare in particular, there would have to be a more efficient division of labour among the various parts of the system.

15. UNICEF's programme was reasonably well-focused and its operational efficiency generally high, and it had, as was to be expected, a comparative advantage in the field of advocacy. The problems facing UNICEF were to some extent the reverse of its advantages. UNICEF was facing two trade-offs: a

(Ms. Poulsen, Denmark)

trade-off between advocacy and spectacular results on the one hand and optimum allocation of resources to achieve important but non-quantifiable results on the other; and a trade-off between getting things done with more spectacular efficiency in the short-term without integrating activities sufficiently into local institutional structures on the one hand, and capacity-building and sustainability on the other.

16. Those problems had to be faced and tackled. More attention must be given to integrated approaches, even if that meant a less satisfactory delivery rate, and to the optimum use of resources rather than the achievement of self-imposed quantitative targets. More attention would also have to be given to full cooperation with other parts of the United Nations system.

17. Two prerequisites for sustainable development were halting environmental degradation and checking population growth. UNICEF, which was participating actively in preparations for the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, had the potential through its education activities to raise awareness from childhood onwards of the importance of environmental problems. It also contributed directly to environmental protection through its water and sanitation programmes. As for controlling population growth, Denmark felt that UNICEF had neglected family planning. Decision 1990/7, adopted by the Executive Board at Denmark's request, had been disappointing in that its references to family planning were somewhat bland and gave no idea of the extent of UNICEF activities. Denmark expected the next report to give more specific information on UNICEF family planning activities globally, not just in individual countries. The issue of family planning went far beyond safe motherhood and child spacing. Increased reliance on family planning was of overriding importance for social and economic development in general, for if fewer children were born, those there would have better access to education and health care, and the situation of women would improve. The magnitude of the problem was illustrated by the fact that in many developing countries, close to half the population was under the age of 16. As an organization devoted to dealing with the problems of mothers and children, UNICEF must give population issues a proper place in its activities. Women's right to control their own bodies and to determine the number and frequency of childbirths must be fully respected through access to family planning. Ironically, activities in other areas that were saving the lives of children were paving the way for a population explosion that would require strong family planning policies.

18. With regard to the 1992-1993 budget estimates in document E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.1, Denmark generally shared the views of ACABQ and was especially concerned about the relative increase in administrative costs.

19. Mrs. CORNAZ (Switzerland) said that the follow-up to the World Summit for Children included a wide array of important tasks and responsibilities, some of which, but not all, were covered by UNICEF's mandate. Countries themselves, in both North and South, had primary responsibility, since most child suffering was man-made. At the same time, UNICEF's advocacy role remained important. It must continue to raise international awareness about the importance of taking the needs of children into account. Every country, Government or ministry, and every corporation and organization, should analyse regularly the impact of its actions on the situation of children. Otherwise, follow-up to the Summit would be confined to isolated actions and improvements would be limited.

20. In preparing country programmes, UNICEF should base its strategy on the goals of the Summit Declaration, the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, it should also urge individual countries to ascertain the actual situation of children within the national context, in order to determine what action needed to be taken. Such a laborious process of diagnosis was the only way to define effective measures and programmes. For example, her country had recently begun to address the problem of "hidden children" - children of seasonal foreign workers not entitled to enter Switzerland with their parents but smuggled in none the less. The search for ways to meet their education and health needs touched very closely on Swiss labour and immigration policy.

21. UNICEF must continue its vital work for the protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, such as those affected by war and street children. It had a duty to be their advocate, especially in its contacts with Governments.

22. UNICEF should refine its evaluation methods and tools with a view to improving analysis of individual countries' ability to prepare and execute initiatives as a follow-up to the World Summit, as well as analysis of the durability and developmental impact of such initiatives.

23. Her delegation welcomed the emphasis on improving basic health services, and favoured adopting a global approach rather than concentrating on specific health aspects when helping countries improve such services.

24. Her delegation noted certain improvements concerning the transparency of data provided in the budget proposal, but endorsed ACABQ comments regarding the difficulty of estimating actual overheads and the costs of programme support activities. Programme resource reports and new programme budgets should indicate the proportion of expenditures allocated for staff, equipment, investment and other operating costs. Her delegation also urged the preparation of a contingency plan, in case the highly optimistic resource growth forecasts proved inaccurate, and believed that UNICEF should envisage a zero-growth option for its headquarters staff.

25. Mr. TORNUDD (Finland) noted that the major issues before the Executive Board included the budget estimates for 1992-1993 and UNICEF's role in the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. That follow-up should focus on the situation in developing countries and the challenges of the 90s, such as UNICEF's role in emergencies and an updated approach to basic services for children.

26. The year 1990 had culminated in the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the adoption of the Plan of Action of the World Summit. Those normative and operational guidelines should be built into strategies for the 1990s. UNICEF must also clearly define its role as a development agency and as an advocate for children in both developing and developed countries. Its efficiency should be assessed on a country-by-country basis, and its contribution should be seen as part of a coordinated effort by all development partners at the country level.

27. The Executive Board should concentrate on clarifying the respective advocacy roles and responsibilities of the various units of UNICEF, field offices in particular. Advocacy for children need not be extended, but better focused. There was also a clear need for UNICEF to be an advocate for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

28. Since the Board's last session, the United Nations system had faced one of its most important challenges: the aftermath of the crisis caused by the occupation of Kuwait. For UNICEF that had meant providing disaster relief and emergency assistance to offset the most adverse consequences of the deteriorating situation for children. The international relief response had highlighted the need for the Board to further clarify UNICEF's role in emergencies. So far, that role had been defined only in terms of the target group, namely, children. However, a coherent international response to disaster situations through the established United Nations system should be based not only on the target group but on an effective division of tasks between the relevant organizations, according to their comparative advantages. UNICEF's approach of responding only to target groups had often resulted in lack of coordination and fragmented activities. UNICEF should contribute actively to the preparation of reports requested from the Secretary-General by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly analysing the United Nations response to emergency.

29. The primary health care sector also required further clarification. Under the widely accepted division of labour between UNICEF and WHO, UNICEF was operational in the field in supporting primary health care activities, while WHO was responsible for normative tasks. Country programmes were increasingly characterized by an integrated approach that included all aspects of primary health care and should also include family planning and AIDS control. Through the country programming process, an approach that was sustainable for each individual country should be determined, and should then be applied in cooperation with other United Nations organizations. The Bamako Initiative should be developed and tested in closer cooperation with WHO. In

(Mr. Tornudd, Finland)

that connection, his delegation believed that approaches like the vaccine independence initiative fell outside the UNICEF mandate, but that testing of the improved vaccines could be organized in connection with its immunization programmes.

30. The proposed budget did not meet the requirements of transparency and clarity and the information justifying income projections was inadequate. His delegation would like to know more about the work plan underlying the budget. The main concern should be to determine how to use available resources more efficiently. His Government was of the view that the budget process needed to be revised.

31. Mr. STAMPS (Zimbabwe) said that great achievements had taken place in the past year, providing the opportunity for significant change in the lives of children. His delegation appreciated the high priority still accorded to Africa by UNICEF. That priority must be translated into real and meaningful programmes in the field through increased budgetary and technical support, despite increasing demands from the Middle East and Eastern European regions. Africa's leaders had supported the World Summit for Children, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had taken a number of initiatives specifically related to children's issues.

32. Africa had made remarkable progress towards achieving universal child immunization by the year 2000, with no fewer than 25 countries expected to achieve their 1990s goal of protecting 75 per cent of children against the six main child-killer diseases. In implementing the goals of the World Summit, relief corridors had been established in Angola and the Sudan. African leaders had also fully endorsed the Bamako Initiative as a means of revitalizing primary health care on a sustainable basis. All those gains were being threatened, unfortunately, by the AIDS epidemic, which was seriously eroding achievements in Africa. Because 25 per cent of those dying of AIDS in that region were children under the age of four and 50 per cent of the remainder were young parents, UNICEF must now become actively involved in AIDS awareness and control programmes. His Government supported the UNICEF nutrition strategy and believed that it would contribute significantly towards the elimination of malnutrition in Africa.

33. In Africa, 10,000 children died and another 10,000 were crippled for life each day as a result of war and civil strife. Although his Government welcomed the positive steps proposed by the Pretoria regime towards dismantling apartheid, the children of southern Africa continued to bear a heavy burden and the number of children in difficult circumstances continued to increase exponentially. Rebel groups in Angola, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe were continuing their activities, and the increased violence was affecting children in particular. It was his Government's view that the time was not yet ripe for the world community to ease pressure on South Africa. That country was making clandestine attempts to acquire respectability through the support given to South African non-governmental organizations. Such

(Mr. Stamps, Zimbabwe)

organizations pursued the laudable aim of minimizing the trauma to children, but their efforts had the net effect of cushioning the Government of South Africa against its duty to protect South Africa's children, in an economy already adjusted in favour of the white, wealthy and healthy urban minority.

34. In Zimbabwe, the structural adjustment programme would impose new stresses on vulnerable groups, especially women and children, but in the long term should strengthen the economy. The impact of the Gulf crisis had also led to cuts in education, housing and health services. As the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade neared its end, many children would continue to suffer from the lack of a clean, safe water supply.

35. His delegation was concerned about the sufferings of Palestinian children living under difficult circumstances similar to apartheid. Urgent political decisions leading to a permanent solution of that issue were needed. The sufferings of the Iraqi people were a source of great sadness, and his delegation hoped that conditions in Kuwait would stabilize soon to enable children there to grow up and develop in a normal environment.

36. Turning to the budget, the overriding issue was the maintenance of UNICEF support for country activities. The budget should be a financial component of UNICEF goals and should be supportive of those objectives which emphasized performance in the field. His delegation supported the strengthening of field offices. It was rather concerned at criticisms of that approach from some of the most highly developed countries, which he hoped did not mask a wish to reduce contributions.

37. Mr. ROE (Republic of Korea) said that 1990 had been an historic year for children. By adopting the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children, world leaders had committed themselves to the cause of children in a strong and eloquent manner. The entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been another milestone in efforts to enhance the rights and well-being of children. He also welcomed the progress achieved in universal child immunization. Nevertheless, much remained to be done to meet the goals for the 1990s which had been set at the previous session.

38. The following points should be taken into account during the discussion. First, the aim of UNICEF activities should be to ensure lasting benefits. Secondly, programmes should be evaluated in both quantitative and qualitative terms. It was necessary to focus on those who were most in need and had no access even to relief assistance programmes. Thirdly, priority should continue to be given to developing countries, particularly the least developed. In that connection, cooperation with other United Nations agencies, such as WHO and UNESCO, should be strengthened.

39. Since his Government attached great importance to human resources development, it supported a gradual but substantial increase in the proportion of UNICEF resources devoted to basic education. He believed that education for all could lead to health and welfare for all in the long run.

(Mr. Roe, Republic of Korea)

40. The experience of the Republic of Korea underscored the unwelcome side-effects of rapid development. There was an increasing recognition by Governments and the general public of the need for more human services to address the various social problems arising from urbanization, such as juvenile delinquency, child abuse and the lack of day-care facilities. UNICEF should continue to be involved in efforts to solve those problems.

41. With regard to the national programme of action adopted by the Republic of Korea as a follow-up to the World Summit, his Government in 1991 had established the Ministry of Sports and Youth to formulate and coordinate policies involving children and youth. The outmoded Civil Code had been revised with a view to reducing the traditional disparities between girls and boys. Recently, free immunization had been provided to low-income families in an effort to maintain a level of approximately 90 per cent immunization coverage for infants. A special programme had also been introduced to contain the spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Through the promotion of maternal and child health and family health programmes and family planning, the annual population growth rate had remained below 1 per cent. His country was a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and would soon complete its ratification procedures. Lastly, his Government had increased its financial contribution to UNICEF for 1991 by almost 50 per cent. Discussions were taking place with UNICEF in order to ensure a smooth transition from a recipient to a donor relationship. A self-reliant National Committee for UNICEF would be established in the near future.

42. Mr. SEZAKI (Japan) said that the year 1990 had been marked by events of historic importance, such as the World Conference on Education for All, the World Summit for Children and the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, the goal of 80 per cent immunization coverage had been achieved, thereby greatly improving prospects for the health and survival of children. UNICEF should take measures to sustain the momentum created in the past year and to further enhance public awareness of issues relating to children. For its part, Japan was currently preparing its national programme of action with a view to fulfilling the commitments which it had made in the context of the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action.

43. Despite the progress made in 1990, serious problems remained. In sub-Saharan Africa, the situation of children had deteriorated as a result of the region's continuing economic decline, natural disasters, civil strife and AIDS. In his view, UNICEF should avoid expanding its area of activities beyond its mandate, especially to issues dealt with in other forums, such as debt alleviation and the environment. Rather, he felt that special importance should be attached to UNICEF activities in sub-Saharan Africa, and he welcomed the decision to increase the funding allocation to that region. Furthermore, greater efforts should be made to raise public awareness concerning AIDS and assistance to AIDS orphans should be increased.

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

44. His delegation felt strongly that UNICEF should intensify its assistance in the area of universal basic education. With regard to health and sanitation, the level of child immunization in African countries must be raised to that of other regions, and the goal of universal immunization against measles should be pursued more actively. While welcoming the initiative taken by UNICEF to explore new and improved vaccines, he stressed the importance of cooperation with WHO, which had expertise in that area. For its part, Japan had been contributing to the expanded programme on immunization since 1988, providing medical equipment valued at 670 million yen for the control of infectious diseases, as well as multilateral and bilateral assistance through UNICEF to 13 countries. He noted with satisfaction that UNICEF had been highly successful in promoting the use of oral rehydration salts and controlling acute respiratory infections, and urged the continuation of those efforts.

45. Since the Board's previous session, a number of emergency situations had arisen, particularly in Asia and Africa, to which UNICEF had responded promptly. His country had been cooperating in those efforts on a case-by-case basis, extending assistance through UNICEF to Sri Lankans affected by civil strife and making financial contributions to UNICEF in order to assist Iraqi and Kuwaiti refugees in the Gulf region. He felt, however, that there must be closer coordination between UNICEF and other United Nations agencies and that its role in such efforts should be more clearly defined.

46. With regard to the revised budget estimates for the biennium 1990-1991 and budget estimates for the biennium 1992-1993 (E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.1), his delegation believed that, with the expansion in the programme budget, the administrative budget of UNICEF should be kept as lean as possible. In that connection, several issues raised in the ACABQ report on the budget estimates (E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.10) should be considered, including the size of the administrative budget in relation to total expenditures and the trend towards a top-heavy structure at headquarters. With regard to the proposal to increase core posts both at headquarters and in the field, his delegation was not convinced that such a step was necessary and would therefore be unable to approve the request unless a more satisfactory explanation was forthcoming from the secretariat. He hoped that a careful review of the budget would be carried out at the next meeting of the Committee on Administration and Finance. He proposed that an invitation should be extended to the Chairman of ACABQ to attend that meeting so that an exchange of views could take place.

47. Lastly, it should be noted that the UNICEF budget, as presented, was extremely difficult to understand. It did not provide a detailed breakdown of items or justify them adequately. He hoped that UNICEF would make efforts to improve its budget presentation and that the Executive Director would give personal attention to the matter.

48. Mr. SALMERON (Nicaragua) said that, in the past 15 years, his country had suffered the consequences of war, which was the worst epidemic afflicting mankind. Of Nicaragua's 3.5 million inhabitants, 170,000 had been killed and 20,000 maimed, and 10,600 children had been orphaned. In the past 10 months, his country had had to cope with the additional burden of reintegrating 300,000 refugees. Because of the economic devastation wrought by the war, it was having extreme difficulty in dealing with those problems.

49. Children under 15, who represented 56 per cent of the population, were beset by hunger and disease. The infant mortality rate was 71.4 deaths per 1,000 live births. During the most recent measles epidemic, 750 children aged under 4 had lost their lives. Their immune systems had been weakened by malnutrition, despite the fact that in the past year his Government had been able to raise immunization coverage to 80 per cent. In that effort, helicopters formerly devoted to military purposes had been used to bring immunization to remote rural areas. However, the peasants in those areas were facing other serious problems, such as the lack of drinking water and the inability to meet their basic needs.

50. During the past decade, Nicaragua had figured prominently in the news, but with the war at an end, he feared that his country's needs might be forgotten. The Chamorro Government was endeavouring to make democracy a reality and to build a society based on social justice. As a member of the Executive Board, his country would be in a better position to encourage investment, so as to be able to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged groups who constituted 80 per cent of the population. UNICEF programmes, such as the Five-Year Integrated Rural Development Programme (PQDRI) and emergency assistance programmes, would help to provide a sound basis for democracy.

51. Mr. FORTIER (Canada) said that despite the impressive achievements of the past year, which included the adoption of the World Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children, the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the attainment of the goal of 80 per cent immunization coverage for children in the developing world, the international community still faced serious problems caused by the rapid political, social and economic changes in Central and Eastern Europe, the consequences of the Gulf war, threats to the environment, external debt and the precarious social and economic situation in Africa.

52. To sustain the momentum generated by the World Summit, Canada was developing its own plan of action to fulfil its domestic and international commitments. For example, a major conference on micronutrients would be held at Montreal in July 1991 with the aim of helping developing countries end hidden hunger.

53. The operational activities of UNICEF were the backbone of its excellent reputation. UNICEF must strike a balance between basic programme delivery and the public information, advocacy and social mobilization efforts that promoted programme delivery. In the present circumstances, it would be difficult to

(Mr. Fortier, Canada)

justify the diversion of resources from developing countries to finance follow-up measures to the Summit and the Convention in industrialized countries. In applying the strategies elaborated at the Summit, it was essential to be sensitive to national aspirations and circumstances. The goal should be to nourish national capacities to provide and manage health, education and basic social services; progress should not be measured by quantitative targets alone.

54. He welcomed the positive steps taken in the area of external relations, particularly the improved structural cooperation among the Division of Information, the Programme Funding Office, the Greeting Card Operation (GCO) and the Division of Public Affairs; the restructuring and strengthening of the Geneva office; and the improved quality of support to National Committees through the Division of Public Affairs. He looked forward to further improvements in that area.

55. Because of Canada's increasing debt, on which nearly one third of every tax dollar had to be spent, its administrative budgets had been frozen and its official development assistance budget would be constrained for some years to come. UNICEF must be cautious in its revenue projections, since it could not expect to sustain the significant programme growth of the 1980s. Resources must not be wasted, and some outdated programmes should be cut back so that UNICEF could respond to current needs. In view of the need for budgetary restraint, an increase of more than 30 per cent over the initial 1990-1991 budget was simply too high. The automatic cost increases in the intervening period called for even greater prudence in deciding on discretionary increases. The growth in administrative costs should in no circumstance exceed income projections, and caution should be exercised in considering proposals concerning organizational structures and classification. There was also a need for comprehensiveness and transparency in budget presentations. Since a variety of programme initiatives, such as the explosion in the number of project and core posts, had direct budgetary implications, the Board should be given a comprehensive overview of the programme support requirements of UNICEF. Lastly, the resources deployed through the budgetary process should be allocated first and foremost to substantive UNICEF programme activities.

56. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) had recently completed an evaluation of its international immunization programme, over half of whose $54 million budget had been channelled through UNICEF. The results of that evaluation had been positive and included a number of case studies of UNICEF immunization programmes which might interest participants in those programmes Canada was currently coordinating an institutional evaluation of UNICEF in cooperation with Denmark, Switzerland, Australia and UNICEF personnel. That evaluation, which should be completed by 1992-1993, should provide valuable insights into the viability of health programmes, UNICEF as an institution, emergency relief programmes, evaluation and external relations.

57. Mr. ABU SALIH (Sudan) said that the Sudan's deep cultural commitment to children had been reflected in a 1990 declaration on immunization which had set the goal of achieving UCI by the end of the year; he was proud to announce that that goal had been reached. In addition, several national conferences had been held on issues related to the survival, protection and development of children, and had yielded a number of useful recommendations. The Sudan had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its Head of State had signed the World Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. As a follow-up to the Summit, a law establishing a National Council for Children had been drafted and should be implemented shortly. A political declaration had been issued on the Sudan's commitment to achieving education for all by the year 2000, and an intersectoral committee had been established for follow-up and for the drafting of a plan of action to that end.

58. Despite the Sudan's aspirations for peace and genuine development, its children were suffering from the combined onslaught of external political factors, economic hardship, drought and civil war. It remained strongly committed to the humanitarian principles of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), which were currently being applied in situations of armed conflict in Angola, Ethiopia and the Persian Gulf. Those principles included access to civilians in areas of conflict, neutrality of relief operations, corridors of tranquillity and cooperation with the international community, including non-governmental organizations. The Sudan saw no contradiction between humanitarian assistance to civilian populations and the principle of national sovereignty, provided that all parties honoured the terms of Operation Lifeline agreements. UNICEF had a key role to play in planning, monitoring and implementing conflict relief operations while maintaining impartiality and transparency.

59. Notwithstanding the Sudan's many achievements, thousands of its children died each year from preventable causes and almost half of all Sudanese children of the age of six did not attend school. His Government was tackling those problems in the broader context of the debt burden and economic stagnation which plagued the entire African continent. The Sudan was encouraged by achievements in the Middle East and North Africa in the areas of immunization, oral rehydration therapy (ORT) and the advancement of women. However, it was concerned about the unprotected Palestinian children and called on UNICEF to undertake a comprehensive study of that issue, similar to the study published on children in southern Africa. In addition, more effective programmes were needed in Iraq, Kuwait, Iran and Lebanon, where children had been traumatized by the effects of war.

60. The Sudan's newly established Ministry of Social Development and Welfare was formulating social development policies which relied on grass-roots advocacy and social mobilization. Its programmes were aimed at enhancing and expanding the capacities of local communities and the involvement of indigenous social institutions to permit greater mobilization of resources. The Ministry was also responsible for coordinating the national effort to

(Mr. Abu Salih, Sudan)

mitigate the adverse social effects of structural changes in the economy. To that end, all national social funds had been placed under its supervision. In that respect, he welcomed the decision of the Executive Director to appoint a Director for Emergency Programmes, and hoped that increased international assistance would benefit both relief and development activities in the Sudan. He also supported proposals to enhance the supervisory capacity of UNICEF in his country, and looked forward to an expanded country programme that would intensify the fruitful cooperation between the Sudan and UNICEF.

61. Ms. REHN (Chairman, Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF) said that the ground-breaking events of the past two years, including the rapid ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the attainment of UCI goals in most developing countries and the successful World Summit for Children, had shown that priorities must be clearly defined and that action programmes must be realistic and carefully planned. If the World Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the Summit were not translated into concrete development programmes, with adequate financing and binding commitments from the Governments of both industrialized and developing countries, little progress would be possible. She was less than optimistic about the possibility of raising the necessary funds, in view of the continuation of policies which aggravated the situation of children and women in many countries in spite of the goals set forth in official declarations. However, the Convention was an important instrument which would enable the National Committees to continue their advocacy efforts with increased vigour.

62. The overall framework for development cooperation was currently jeopardized by the hardening of the economic climate and the resulting unwillingness of many countries to seriously discuss a radical redirection of funds to better serve the most vulnerable groups in developing countries. National Committees had an obligation to persuade their Governments to raise the share of basic health, family planning, nutrition, education and other social programmes to 35 or even 40 per cent of the total development assistance budget. In view of the growing crisis in the developing world, especially in Africa, it was more vital than ever that the industrialized countries use development assistance money to help the poorest groups in the poorest countries to help themselves. UNICEF should intensify its advocacy efforts to reduce the debt burden of developing countries and its effects on children and women.

63. Although resolution 1990/5 was still relevant to the rapidly changing situation in Central and Eastern Europe, UNICEF should be extremely careful about committing its resources to activities in industrialized countries, especially since very little of the money approved for Eastern Europe had as yet been spent. UNICEF should be equally careful about initiating new activities elsewhere in the industrialized world, since its primary commitment was to poor countries. The conversion of the National Committees of Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) countries into independent non-governmental organizations, following the pattern in other industrialized countries, was therefore a welcome development.

(Ms. Rehn)

64. In the 1980s, UNICEF had conducted successful UCI and ORT campaigns. In the coming decade, therefore, more resources could be allocated to programmes in such areas as drinking water and sanitation, basic health, family planning, education and nutrition. Since public opinion in many countries gave priority to those areas, greater emphasis on them would benefit the advocacy efforts of UNICEF. She hoped that the Fund's strengthened relationship with UNESCO would encourage it to allocate more funding to the education of women and that its closer cooperation with UNFPA would lead it to take a more active role on the sensitive issue of family planning, which was cause for considerable public concern. In addition to its increased cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNICEF should, as soon as possible, analyse its field programmes from an environmental standpoint and formulate a clear-cut policy that could be conveyed to the Governments and populations of individual countries.

65. Since the success of efforts on behalf of UNICEF depended primarily on the Fund's public image, she was concerned about the prevailing perception of UNICEF as an emergency-oriented organization similar to the International Committee of the Red Cross. Public information about UNICEF should more accurately reflect all of its field activities, including its successes in such areas as drinking water and sanitation, education, public health care, nutrition and appropriate technology. UNICEF information policy should be much more positive, underlining the Fund's own achievements and also what the developing countries themselves had done to improve the situation of children and women. In addition, the Geneva office should be given more authority to develop an effective information strategy in cooperation with the National Committees.

66. In a rapidly changing world situation, the role of the National Committees as vital links between UNICEF headquarters and the general public was crucial. Since the Committees were familiar with the concerns of ordinary people and maintained close contacts with decision makers at all levels, their views should be given more weight in the planning and decision-making process for UNICEF programmes, in accordance with the recommendations of the 1989 evaluation of the external relations policies and functions of UNICEF. Although the recommended review of the recognition agreements between UNICEF and the Committees had begun, it still seemed that with the exception of GCO, the UNICEF secretariat did not regard the Committees as true partners. Therefore, in preparing new recognition agreements, closer cooperation between the Committees and UNICEF should be seriously considered. Like field offices, National Committees should be drawn into the planning process. The outstanding efficiency of GCO demonstrated the advantages of a flexible mode of operation, and she hoped that the recent changes at the highest management level of GCO would not limit that flexibility.

67. Despite her many criticisms, she believed that cooperation between the Committees and the secretariat had greatly improved, inter alia through the regular exchanges of views with the Executive Director. Similar arrangements

(Ms. Rehn)

for discussions with the Deputy Executive Directors would also be mutually beneficial. Another positive sign was the support which many Committees had received recently from both New York and Geneva in their efforts to develop their volunteer sector. Lastly, she was pleased that the issue of education for development, a major concern of almost every Committee, was once again emerging as a vital source of new ideas in the UNICEF secretariat.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

1991 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 23 April 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. PALME (Sweden)

CONTENTS

General debate (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent to Ms. M. A. Cuna, Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board, room H-12K, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. LUNA (Peru) underscored the gravity of the cholera epidemic in his country: currently 150,000 had succumbed and over a thousand had died, and the epidemic was now spreading to neighbouring countries in the region.

2. He expressed appreciation for the promptness and effectiveness with which UNICEF had mobilized its human and logistic resources to help the Peruvian population during the crisis in the country.

3. However, in view of the dimensions the epidemic had taken on, it was important to take urgent new steps, to find supplementary funding and to design a special medium- and long-term programme that would fight all the causes of the disease. Cholera could not be seen as a simple health crisis. It threatened to become a permanent phenomenon when it struck populations living in conditions of extreme poverty, in countries whose economic situation did not allow them to combat it effectively.

4. The World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children stipulated that "through international cooperation and solidarity it should now be possible to achieve concrete results in many fields - to revitalize economic growth and development, to protect the environment, to prevent the spread of fatal and crippling diseases and to achieve greater social and economic justice".

5. Yet the countries of the third world continued to face a cruel and inescapable reality: child mortality, endemic diseases, malnutrition and illiteracy were omnipresent. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, the basic needs of two thirds of the world's population still had not been met, and enormous sectors of Latin America, for instance, were stagnating and even regressing.

6. Despite the efforts of the international community, the realities of 1990 were the following: 14 million children had died, 100 million were malnourished, a third of the population of the developing countries did not have safe drinking water and 80 million children were being subjected to unacceptable exploitation. The situation would have been much more serious if UNICEF had not done remarkable work that deserved the highest recognition. It must continue its work and design mechanisms for improving the conditions of a large part of the population of the third world.

7. His delegation noted with satisfaction that in recent years UNICEF had sought to achieve an appropriate balance in the country programmes for the three regions of the third world. It was important, however, to strive for a better allocation of assistance, and especially to increase the proportion devoted to sanitation and the supply of drinking water.

(Mr. Luna, Peru)

8. UNICEF was still trying to mobilize and raise the consciousness of the most needy segments of the population in order to facilitate their participation in specific programmes. In Peru, certain recently established programmes aimed to mobilize women so that the acquisition of simple techniques, individual as well as collective, could become a factor for change in the living conditions of women and children.

9. It was understandable that UNICEF, owing to its success, should seek to improve its infrastructure. However, it was important to improve the operational capacity not only on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, but also by taking account of the views of governments on what had been accomplished and what remained to be done. It would thus be possible to define with greater precision the needs of each region of the third world. In addition, the temptation should be avoided of undertaking too many activities, the only result of which would be a dispersal of effort and reduced effectiveness. His delegation supported the criterion that assistance must be directed to where it was most needed. While the commitment by UNICEF to Africa was fully justified, it must also take into consideration the deteriorating situation of millions in the other regions of the third world, especially Latin America.

10. Mr. SCHILLING (Germany) said that UNICEF could point to remarkable successes, such as the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the convening of the World Summit for Children and especially the achievement of the goal of the universal child immunization (UCI) campaign. His Government was continuing to support UNICEF activities, as could be seen in its increased contributions in 1990 and 1991 despite severe budgetary constraints.

11. In 1990, UNICEF had constantly tried to bring help quickly and effectively wherever children were the victims of natural and man-made disasters. Germany applauded its activities and saw its humanitarian mandate as a global one, but was convinced that UNICEF should not try to become a universal development agency intervening in areas that were the province of other United Nations agencies. The Executive Director was therefore to be congratulated for his efforts to strengthen inter-agency cooperation, an area where much had been achieved at the headquarters level. More could be done, however, at the field level, through cooperation between multilateral and bilateral donors and interaction between headquarters and field offices. Joint use of a field office by different United Nations organizations could help significantly to improve coordination of their respective activities and reduce administrative costs.

12. In their response to emergency situations, the agencies involved should not engage in a competitive race for donors' funds but should compete to find the best solution and coordinate their activities. The recent Gulf crisis had shown that hasty, parallel and even rival efforts served no one. The way in

(Mr. Schilling, Germany)

which the United Nations system had reacted to the alarming situation of the Kurdish refugees left much to be desired. In emergency situations, donors could respond more effectively when dealing with a single focal agency.

13. Collaboration and coordination were also needed to implement the Summit Declaration and Plan of Action. However, in the concerted efforts that would be required, UNICEF should continue to be guided by the decisions of the Executive Board.

14. In the final analysis, UNICEF success was determined by its projects in the field. However, that success should not distract attention from its main area of activity. The Fund should follow up on programmes by making them sustainable and extending them to hitherto unreached groups before launching new initiatives. Its rich experience in immunization and other basic areas (such as oral rehydration therapy (ORT) or access to drinking water) should be used to develop sustainable primary-health-care systems, particularly in Africa. UNICEF should continue to work with the World Health Organization (WHO) in the fight against the spread of AIDS, and coordinate closely with WHO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in the fields of family planning and birth control.

15. With regard to administration and finance, his delegation would find it helpful to receive the budget documents and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) well in advance in order to be able to study them properly.

16. The draft report of ACABQ raised a number of questions. It was indeed to be feared that the massive increase in the number of posts and in upgrading would be ill-advised. His Government was concerned about the trend towards ever-increasing administrative costs and the growing weight of headquarters services. It should be remembered that UNICEF was a field-oriented organization. Moreover, it seemed that in 1990-1991 the budget reserve had been used in part to finance commitments concerning office space without the prior approval of the Board. His delegation would appreciate receiving further clarification on the matter in the Administration and Finance Committee.

17. Sir David HANNAY (United Kingdom) said that the promises made at the World Summit for Children must be kept, and that the United Kingdom would soon ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

18. A non-governmental Children's Rights Development Unit was to be set up in the United Kingdom to monitor the implementation of the Convention; the Unit had already established links with the UNICEF National Committee. In general, national committees could act as catalysts in setting up monitoring bodies.

19. The United Kingdom, which had taken part in the preparation of the World Declaration and Plan of Action, would be reporting to UNICEF on its own national plan of action during the course of the year. A National Summit had

(Sir David Hannay, United Kingdom)

been organized by the UNICEF Office in the United Kingdom and the British National Children's Bureau in order to raise public awareness about the Declaration. Moreover, the British Minister of Health had requested that measures should be taken to ensure that the United Kingdom's programme was managed in keeping with the fundamental message of the Summit that "children should be first".

20. The programme would be re-examined in the context of the reduction of poverty, the first victims of which were most often women and children. In that regard, all donors should have a better understanding of the poor, as well as better data about them. Donors should take into account local knowledge of poverty and seek the views of poor people. The United Kingdom, which had been working on poverty assessments in Kenya and Bangladesh, hoped to contribute to the World Bank's country poverty assessments.

21. Work in that area had led to the conclusion that direct action must be carried out through the Aid Programme. In order to have a more direct effect on poverty, each major aid programme of the Overseas Development Agency would have a significant poverty component, and funds would be earmarked to alleviate poverty (for example, specific social sector grants).

22. UNICEF was to be congratulated on its achievements in improving women's and children's health in developing countries and, in particular, on its universal child immunization programme. However, the Fund should continue its efforts to find the most effective means of achieving its objectives.

23. Like many other donor countries, the United Kingdom based its strategies for health sector assistance on the needs and interests of recipient countries. That entailed, first, accepting the fact that available resources were never sufficient; secondly, encouraging countries to set priorities which reflected their people's needs; thirdly helping them select cost-effective technologies to tackle priority problems; and fourthly, supporting the establishment of sustainable, well-managed and adequately financed health care systems.

24. All those critical aspects should be taken into account in all measures undertaken to implement the goals of the Summit. He welcomed the reference in the Plan of Action that the child-specific actions proposed must be pursued as part of the strengthening of broader national development programmes. Greater efforts should be made to bring donors and national Governments together to consider the policy and management implications for health goals adopted in each country. Consequently UNICEF should play an additional coordinating role in that area. Some country representatives had already assumed that role. The United Kingdom would be ready to submit to the Executive Board a draft decision encouraging UNICEF to strengthen its health sector coordination activities with national Governments and other donors at the country level.

25. In conclusion, he wished to make a number of suggestions. First UNICEF should be given guidance on ways to achieve the goals of the World Summit; his

(Sir David Hannay, United Kingdom)

delegation would submit a draft decision on the health aspects. Second, the ways in which countries and international organizations reported to UNICEF on measures to follow up the Plan of Action should be clarified. Third, the Ex utive Board should endorse the Executive Director's proposals to place greater emphasis on Africa and to support measures to combat AIDS. Fourth, the Board should indicate to UNICEF where it had comparative advantage in the handling of emergencies. Fifth, cooperation with other United Nations organizations in the area of field work and programming should be encouraged. Sixth, the proposals on the organization of the Board should be adopted in order to ensure more effective management of the Fund's growing resources. Seventh, after devoting adequate time to their study, the Board should adopt the programmes under consideration, as well as a budget. Finally, the Board must ensure that its decisions helped speed up the process of giving priority to children in international thinking and in action.

26. Ms. SETH (India) said that, in the last decade of the millennium, the world had tremendous hope for children and women, in particular the most destitute. Never before had there been such commitment to the cause of children. She drew particular attention to the World Summit for Children, the World Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the Summit, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Those commitments should be pursued with optimism and a greater sense of responsibility. That was precisely India's approach to issues concerning women and children, the eradication of poverty, water supply, environment, education and health. India was currently involved in a regional effort to develop a detailed plan of action for the countries members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

27. In order to reduce infant and child mortality and morbidity, India was continuing to expand its Integrated Child Development Services and endeavouring to improve the quality of services and identify groups in greatest need of special assistance. It had been necessary to ensure intersectoral coordination and to relate the entire gamut of social services to a wider process of demographic, social and economic transformation. In that connection India had developed a uniform media policy.

28. On the occasion of the SAARC Decade of the Girl Child, India had adopted new strategies for protecting adolescent girls, which provided for assistance in the areas of health, nutrition and non-formal education with a view to developing their potential as powerful communicators and social animators in the village.

29. Maternal and child health programmes were the cornerstone of India's social sector planning and human resource development effort. In that respect, her delegation welcomed the increase in the Fund's expenditure on the child, from 40 per cent in 1989 to 45 per cent in 1990.

30. After more than 15 years of its multisectoral child survival and development programme, UNICEF should begin to focus on such new areas as

(Ms. Seth, India)

adolescence, handicapped children, children of working mothers, child labour and, lastly, morally endangered children, such as child prostitutes and street children, to whose plight Sweden and Mexico had already drawn attention.

31. However, the situation of children could not be improved without taking account of the situation of women. The discrimination which women faced in society and in the home struck at the root of development efforts. Her delegation therefore welcomed the increase in UNICEF expenditure on women-related programmes, from 29 per cent in 1990 to 31 per cent in 1991. The safe motherhood campaign, already launched by UNICEF in collaboration with other organizations which were not part of the United Nations system, must be converted into a decade-long programme.

32. As part of India's efforts to enable people to take care of their basic needs themselves, it had emphasized the employment of women. The strategy was to make women aware of their rights and develop their skills, thus creating the conditions for self-employment and income-generation. A major programme for improving the employment situation of rural women was in operation nation wide. There were also plans to facilitate the access of women to credit institutions, particularly in rural areas.

33. In the various development programmes, India's approach had moved from infrastructure creation to community mobilization as a step towards better management of the infrastructure creation. For instance, since women were the main users of water, community mobilization and consciousness-raising focused mainly on poor village women. Currently, efforts were being made to create a mechanism for sustaining the existing services.

34. Knowing from experience that health and immunization intervention must be backed by nutritional measures, India was, through integrated child development services, distributing supplementary nutrition for children and pregnant and lactating mothers to combat anaemia and iodine or other deficiencies. However, such measures required a multidimensional approach and an increase in people's purchasing power to make more food available to them. Her delegation suggested that UNICEF should make the issue of nutrition at the household level one of its major concerns during the nineties, and should aim to develop a credible, integrated nutrition policy for the entire developing world. Unfortunately, UNICEF expenditure on nutrition continued to be insufficient (5 per cent in 1990, according to the Executive Director's report). Her delegation noted with satisfaction that India's suggestion to relate nutrition activities to primary health care had been included in the UNICEF statements on nutrition policy. It would also like to see some mention of its proposal for strengthening the public distribution system in order to improve household-level food availability. On the other hand, the meeting of high-level policy makers held in Florence on safe motherhood and breast-feeding in July-August 1990 at the International Child Development Centre had been a success, and other aspects of maternal and child welfare should be covered in more such meetings.

(Ms. Seth, India)

35. UNICEF should also focus attention in all parts of the world on the control of population growth. A direct propagation of various methods of family planning was an absolute imperative for the developing world.

36. The ravages of AIDS in large parts of Africa, Europe and the Americas demanded world-wide attention, and her delegation supported the efforts made by UNICEF to combat that scourge.

37. Education was at the moment a global priority. In India, the literacy rate had improved steadily from 36 per cent in 1981 to 53 per cent in 1991. Her Government had just launched an education project in the state of Bihar, one of the most backward in the country. The project rejected the traditional centralized bureaucratic mould in favour of a grass-roots approach that gave village women's groups the decision-making power and the catalytic role. UNICEF had already responded favourably to the project, which depended on assistance from UNICEF general and supplementary funds.

38. Her delegation emphasized the need in the coming years for inter-agency cooperation, which would add a new dimension to the work of UNICEF. Inter-agency cooperation should in its view be institutionalized and should include within its scope bilateral agencies such as the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) or the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA).

39. She concluded with two appeals: one for an increase in UNICEF funding, since its programme expenditure had risen by only 8 per cent betweeen 1989 and 1990, less than the inflation rate in many countries; and the other for increased funding for nutrition, the advancement of women and family planning.

40. The challenges were indeed daunting, but India was convinced that the international community was in a position to rise to them.

41. Mr. GARDEZI (Pakistan) recalled the major events involving international action focused on children: the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Conference on Education for All, the World Summit for Children, which had been convened at the initiative of six Governments, one of them Pakistan, and, lastly, the approval in 1990 by the Executive Board of the goals and strategies for children in the 1990s. There had been a tremendous advance in universal child immunization, with immunization coverage in developing countries increasing from less than 20 per cent in 1981 to over 80 per cent for tuberculosis, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus and poliomyelitis, and only measles vaccinations remaining below the 80-per-cent target.

42. The challenges presented by the 1990s were, however, enormous. The developing countries, where most of the world's children lived, were hampered in their efforts by indebtedness, adverse terms of trade and low commodity prices, all too frequently compounded by natural disasters, civil strife in many cases, and the growing threat of AIDS.

(Mr. Gardezi, Pakistan)

43. The World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children set ambitious but not impossible goals. UNICEF had estimated that it would cost $20 billion in the next decade to achieve them. Two thirds of that amount would have to be generated by the developing countries themselves. His Government was pursuing a policy of self-reliance in order to reduce Pakistan's dependence on foreign resources. However, with the developing countries' debt amounting to some $1,300 billion on which interest repayments alone came to $200 billion, and with commodity prices at their lowest level in 60 years, the realization of the Declaration's goals might have to remain just a commitment. The proposed debt-relief schemes for children could be welcome, especially in view of the Gulf war which in Pakistan's case had already cost $1 billion.

44. Despite its financial constraints, his Government was determined to implement the World Declaration and the Plan of Action to the best of its ability. Pakistan's priority remained the promotion of child survival and development, since it ranked thirty-second in 1989 for under-five mortality rates (owing to low birth rates, acute respiratory infections and malnutrition). The figures for other factors such as adult literacy rates, primary school enrolment, female literacy, maternal mortality or access to safe water, were discouraging. Thirty-two per cent of Pakistan's urban population and 29 per cent of the rural population lived below the poverty line. Yet 17 per cent of exports of goods and services were utilized for debt-servicing. None the less, his Government was resolved to confront the enormous task before it.

45. As a follow-up measure to the World Summit for Children, his Government had recommended, at the summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation held at Male in November 1990, the adoption of practical steps to improve conditions for children. The parliament of Pakistan was considering establishing a parliamentary committee on children. Pakistan had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. The Government was well placed to integrate the Declaration and Plan of Action into its national programmes, since it was currently in the process of preparing a new master plan of operations for 1992-1996 and its eighth five-year plan. The Government was working in close collaboration with the UNICEF office in Islamabad, with which it had discussed the formation of a task force to prepare its national programme of action pursuant to the Plan of Action.

46. The well-being of children was a priority concern in Pakistan, where there were some five and a half million births every year and 56.5 million children under the age of 16, of whom 22.5 per cent were under the age of five. In addition for the past decade Pakistan had provided shelter for some 3 million refugees from Afghanistan, a large number of whom were children. Today those children were living in refugee camps, often undernourished, in poor health and without access to education. With the reduction in international assistance for Afghan refugees, much of the burden had fallen on Pakistan alone.

(Mr. Gardezi, Pakistan)

47. A special concern of the Government of Pakistan was the condition of the girl child. The Government recognized the contribution of female literacy to the reduction in maternal mortality, better child care and the deceleration of population growth. As stated by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the development of the country would remain an elusive goal as long as half of the population was denied adequate education and meaningful participation in the decision-making process.

48. Self-reliance being a fundamental objective of its policy, the Government had launched a programme of denationalization and encouragement of the private sector so as to accelerate development and energize the national economy. In the meantime, it was coping with the structural adjustments needed in an economy undergoing transition as well as with the economic impact of the war in the Gulf.

49. He congratulated the Executive Director on the quality, clarity and realism of his annual report. His delegation was pleased to note that child health continued to command the bulk of programme expenditure. In cooperation with UNICEF, Pakistan had made great strides in developing an immunization and oral rehydration therapy programme. The immunization programme had led to an average increase of 10 per cent in all antigens for children aged from 12 to 23 months, and a 30 per cent increase in those under 12 months. Remarkable progress had also been made in protecting against neonatal tetanus, and 80 per cent of mothers had been made aware of oral rehydration therapy. The control of acute respiratory infections was also progressing satisfactorily and efforts were being redoubled to expand immunization against measles. In order to maintain those successes, surveillance of vaccine preventable diseases must be strengthened and primary health care must be further expanded.

50. Less than one third of the population had access to an adequate water supply, and less than one fifth had any sanitation facilities. UNICEF was actively engaged in those fields in Pakistan, and he noted with satisfaction that UNICEF's expenditure in those areas had increased by $6 million in 1990; on the other hand, the percentage of supplementary funding in those two areas had declined since 1970-1979. At the end of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, in 1990, only 60 per cent of the population of the developing countries had had access to clean water and only 25 per cent to proper sanitation facilities.

51. His delegation had noted with interest the Executive Director's proposals on the restructuring of national budgets and of official development assistance as a means of generating the necessary resources for attaining the goals of the World Summit, and had further noted that the Executive Director had also drawn attention to the social costs of adjustment programmes, which tended to have the greatest impact on the most deprived groups in society.

52. In conclusion, he reaffirmed his Government's unshakeable commitment to the goals of the World Summit for Children. Pakistan would do its utmost to improve the health and quality of life of its children.

53. Mr. TREPCZYNSKI (Poland) said that never before had the international community so forcefully reasserted its responsibility for all the children of the world. The task was now to translate into reality the potential represented by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children. The undertaking required continued efforts on the part of governmental and non-governmental institutions and national and international organizations, as well as the mobilization of sizeable resources. It was encouraging to note that some countries had already begun to apply the provisions of the Convention and to adapt their domestic legislation as a result.

54. The Polish National Committee for UNICEF had recently organized, with the Institute of Law of the Polish Academy of Sciences, a conference on the legal and other consequences for Poland of its accession to the Convention. Steps had also been taken to familiarize schoolchildren with the text of the Convention.

55. His delegation commended UNICEF's External Relations Group for its activities in connection with the media and for its excellent publications on the Convention and the Summit. It would be desirable for an information bulletin on the implementation of the Convention in various countries to be published periodically in order to stimulate its promotion and facilitate the necessary exchange of experience. The item merited a special section in the next report on the state of the world's children.

56. His delegation was satisfied with the programme of action submitted in the documents for the session, notably the report of the Executive Director and the medium-term plan for the period 1991-1994. He noted with satisfaction the progress attained in universal child immunization and endorsed the conclusion that UNICEF action in Africa should be given priority. His delegation was greatly concerned at the tragic plight of children in the Persian Gulf region, and appreciated the action taken by UNICEF in that region, which merited additional aid. He was disturbed by the degradation of the environment in the Gulf and elsewhere, including Poland, where its adverse impact on children was becoming increasingly alarming.

57. He referred to the continued difficulties being experienced by many children in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in terms of nutrition, health care and quality of life, and especially in large families, hospitals and orphanages. An estimated 15 per cent of all children in Poland were handicapped in some way. In Poland, single mothers were responsible for meeting the needs of some 1.5 million children. Crèches, kindergartens and other establishments for children were being closed owing to a lack of resources. Accordingly, his delegation saw a need for UNICEF to take new initiatives, without prejudice to developing countries, based on the resolution on Central and Eastern Europe adopted in 1990 by the Executive Board.

58. While his delegation found satisfactory the steps so far taken, such as the round table on safety nets for children in Central and Eastern Europe,

(Mr. Trepczynski, Poland)

held at Warsaw in October 1990, UNICEF's involvement should not be limited to such forms of action. The agency should, as soon as possible, undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the situation of children in the region and establish a suitable programme of action. In that connection the UNICEF Geneva Office should play a more active role in Eastern Europe.

59. He congratulated the Greeting Card Operation, which had generated increased sales of UNICEF products in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, thus strengthening the financial independence of their National Committees. The Polish National Committee for UNICEF expected to double its sale of greeting cards by the end of the year and to treble it within two years.

60. He noted with satisfaction that UNICEF's budget continued to grow, both in terms of revenue and expenditure, and that a high percentage of UNICEF staff were working in the field. Given the constant expansion of its activities, a limited increase in its staff was justified.

61. Mr. TEELEY (United States of America) said that the events of the past two years could not fail to serve as a reminder of the circumstances in which UNICEF had been established in war-torn Europe over 40 years earlier. Instead of working only in the field of development, where its responsibilities lay, UNICEF was often called upon to relieve suffering in areas of conflict. Nevertheless, the Fund had continued to broaden the field of its activities, meeting new challenges, such as the AIDS epidemic at the current time, and thereby assuming growing responsibilities. Its resources were likely to increase only modestly over the next few years, while new demands for emergency or special assistance were being added to the already considerable requirements in the more traditional areas of education, health, agriculture and family planning. Although national Governments were grappling with the impact of economic recession and debt, they were nevertheless committed to pursuing the goals of the World Summit for Children.

62. In that climate, the Executive Board would review the Fund's budget for the next two years. His delegation, which intended to make sure that best use was made of available resources, believed that there were savings to be made and that there should be better cooperation between UNICEF and its partners in the United Nations system. The Board should improve its methods of work so that its members could fulfil their responsibilities for guiding UNICEF programmes.

63. Referring to the report of the Executive Director on the work carried out in 1990, he noted with satisfaction the success of the World Summit for Children and the universal child immunization programme. He welcomed the contribution by UNICEF in that field as well as the work done by the private sector, particularly through private voluntary activities and the national committees affiliated with the Fund, in preparing for and ensuring the success of the Summit as well as implementing the measures adopted on that occasion to

(Mr. Teeley, United States)

improve the health and welfare of children. Together with the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All, the Summit had clearly demonstrated that there was a world-wide consensus and collective will to address serious deficiencies in education, health and the development of children within the current decade. Nevertheless, the real measure of success was yet to be determined in the concrete actions to be taken as a follow-up to those meetings. The Executive Board would provide guidance to UNICEF in defining its role in implementing the Plan of Action and the appropriate focus for utilizing Summit goals to develop national programmes of action. That was an area where it would be important to ensure full cooperation with the other parts of the United Nations system so that resources remained focused on activities that benefited children directly.

64. The United States had already embarked on its own plan of action. A delegation had recently visited Africa in order to study in the field the situation of children of the region and determine the measures to be taken to ensure child survival. The delegation had concluded that, in order to preserve the remarkable accomplishments in that area and in the field of primary health care, it was essential to combat malaria and AIDS. With regard to malaria, his delegation encouraged UNICEF to participate in the WHO World Summit on Malaria in 1992. With respect to AIDS, a disease which, according to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Health Policy, might soon obliterate all progress achieved in the field of child survival in certain regions, the Programme Committee should discuss that question as a separate item on its agenda; in view of the seriousness of the topic, it should be given adequate attention, particularly by the Executive Board.

65. The Fund's contribution to inter-agency cooperation was vital for the efficient delivery of emergency health services by the United Nations system, which was currently necessary in the Persian Gulf region. The capacity of UNICEF to ensure the speedy mobilization of resources in such conditions should serve as an example for other United Nations agencies that wished to respond in a rapid and coordinated manner to emergency situations that arose. The Executive Board would review in that regard the administrative framework for such cooperation as described in document E/ICEF/1991/11.

66. In spite of the attention given to emergency situations, UNICEF continued to remind the world of the focus of its regular programmes, particularly in Africa, where the challenge to meet the goals of the World Summit for Children was the most difficult. While priority should be given to that continent, the other regions of the world should not be neglected. His delegation was pleased with the progress made through the Bamako Initiative, which offered important possibilities for improving access to primary health care services and promoted programme sustainability; it also had potential for controlling malaria, diarrhoeal disease, AIDS and other diseases. Nevertheless, UNICEF should ensure that new financing methods did not block the access of poor people to needed services. The Initiative should help revitalize the health systems in Africa.

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67. In Africa and other regions, development efforts continued to focus on women and girls. The progress report on achievements made in the implementation of UNICEF policy on women and girls (E/ICEF/1991/L.5) demonstrated in an encouraging way the results that could be achieved through global advocacy. None the less, it was cause for concern that only 30 per cent of UNICEF country programmes were complying satisfactorily with Executive Board policy on women and girls. In order to protect women's health and reduce the spread of AIDS it was essential to strengthen voluntary family planning. Thoughtful country population policies and access to family planning sources were critically necessary and UNICEF should promote incorporation of child-spacing activities into all country programmes.

68. His delegation attached great importance to the decision taken the previous year by the Board on external relations. The evaluation on which it had been based had offered valuable suggestions for improving the integration of external relations into UNICEF programmes. It was hoped that the Fund would continue to work towards fulfilling those recommendations in order to strengthen the management and cost-effectiveness of that function, and that the Board would carry out an in-depth review of the matter at its 1992 session.

69. Programme growth required administrative resources sufficient to ensure adequate programme management. While his delegation appreciated the efforts made by UNICEF with regard to the draft budget, there was still some distance to cover before arriving at an optimal budget. One might wonder about the advisability of approving a significant number of new posts at headquarters, the reclassification of a number of posts, the transfer of auditors to headquarters and the acquisition of additional office space in New York.

70. Mr. TIULIANDIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the past year had been marked by a number of historic events: the end of antagonism between the blocs, progress in disarmament and the emergence of a general awareness of the interdependence of the modern world and the need to find common solutions to problems facing countries. However, those processes would certainly encounter obstacles and difficulties.

71. In 1990, the world had witnessed a flagrant act of aggression against an independent State. The mass mobilization of the international community against the aggressor had signalled a positive change of attitude; there had been a sudden awareness of the unity of the planet and of its limits, as well as of the eternal nature of moral values.

72. In many respects, 1990 had marked a turning point in international cooperation for children. The most outstanding event had been the World Summit for Children, at which the leaders of many countries had demonstrated their political will to accord priority to children in national and international development programmes, by adopting the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s and a Plan of Action. Those two instruments not only set out the goals and commitments of

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the international community but also provided for concrete implementation measures, follow-up operations and control mechanisms.

73. In keeping with the decisions of the Summit, the USSR had recently drawn up a programme of action for the 1990s containing directives for improving the situation of women and families and protecting mothers and children. It had adopted an integrated approach, taking account of social, economic, medical, environmental, ethical and other factors influencing the situation of mothers and children. That set of measures should change the social climate by emphasizing values common to mankind and should also make it possible to bring about significant reductions in maternal and infant mortality rates and the number of handicapped children and orphans, as well as the juvenile delinquency rate. The implementation of those directives would require allocations on the order of 40 billion roubles over a period of 10 years, and investments of 51 billion roubles. The principles which inspired the programme - namely, the priority given to the interests of children, the right of all children to benefit from the social and economic services necessary for their physical and mental development, and the authorities' responsibility for the welfare of destitute children - were in complete conformity with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the Supreme Soviet of the USSR had ratified in 1990. That instrument also served as the basis for a bill on the same subject, which was currently being considered by all concerned organizations.

74. In spite of the difficulties which it faced and which were principally due to its transition to a market economy, the USSR sought to protect women and children not only by enacting laws but also by providing them with material assistance. The Soviet Union also continued to assist the least developed countries within the limits of its means.

75. His delegation welcomed the fact that UNICEF was currently involved in activities to assist children all over the world, and no longer only those in developing countries. It was essential to adopt a global approach in order to find a solution to problems of world importance. The USSR was grateful to UNICEF and the various agencies which had provided assistance in such emergency situations as the earthquake in Armenia, the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and the environmental catastrophe of the Aral Sea.

76. One of the Fund's principal tasks was to encourage the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by all countries prepared to provide concrete proof that they respected the international legal norms for protecting children and defending their rights. By participating in the World Conference on Education for All, UNICEF had demonstrated its determination to step up its participation in activities in that area and to encourage the adoption of innovative approaches to the establishment of national systems of basic education. While the achievement of the goals of the universal child immunization programme was in itself a success, it was still only a first step in carrying out such difficult tasks as ensuring the programme's

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sustainability, increasing vaccination rates, reducing morbidity and mortality rates and eradicating a number of serious diseases. The achievement of those goals would require a reallocation of resources to programmes in the areas of basic education, water supply, the development of new vaccines and emergency humanitarian assistance.

77. Mr. BULL (Liberia) said that, at the end of the 1980s, there had been practically no improvement in the living conditions of people living in most parts of the world, and poverty in Africa and Latin America had even increased. It had then projected that, by the year 2000, sub-Saharan Africa, which had 29 of the 42 least developed countries, would have the greatest proportion of poor in any region of the world. Although that was a dismal projection, there were many ways to reverse that trend, as indicated in the Programme of Action adopted by the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held at Paris in 1990. Moreover, the World Summit for Children had been an unprecedented event which had provided an opportunity to make real changes. In paragraph 34 of the Plan of Action, each country was invited to prepare a national plan, and UNICEF could play an important role in assisting countries to fulfil that obligation. The results of the universal child immunization programme had shown what planned and concerted action by the international community could achieve. That was a lesson which should be used to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of programmes to implement the goals of the Summit.

78. The World Conference on Education for All, held at Jomtien, Thailand, had been another important event mentioned in the Executive Director's report. The participants had recognized the need for the quality and accessibility of primary education for all, including children and women.

79. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provided the legal framework for the survival, protection and development of children, had entered into force only nine months after its adoption by the General Assembly in 1989. The Convention was further testimony of the political commitment of leaders to accord a high level of priority to the situation of children.

80. The world economic situation, coupled with civil strife, natural disasters and disease, was continuing to have a devastating impact on the survival and well-being of millions of African children; he therefore welcomed the priority given by UNICEF to Africa. That region was the only one in the world in which child and maternal mortality were on the rise. In order to reverse that trend, UNICEF, the international community and governments must take up the challenge. The quality of staff in the field was important in achieving that objective, and he noted with satisfaction that the requisite budgetary appropriations had been made to strengthen UNICEF field offices in Africa.

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81. He also welcomed the growing support offered by many donor countries for the implementation of the Bamako Initiative, which was designed to strengthen the capacity of the primary health care infrastructure to provide affordable health services with active community participation.

82. Most of the world's emergencies were occurring in Africa. Liberia, for example, had been devastated by a brutal civil war which, unfortunately, had been forgotten by the international community. He noted that, of a population of 2.4 million, 800,000 had been compelled to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, 1.2 million had been internally displaced and an estimated 80,000 had been killed. Accordingly, it was disappointing that the initial appeal for $13.8 million, which had been issued by the Secretary-General in November 1990 upon the resumption of United Nations activities in Liberia, had not received the anticipated response. Nevertheless, through UNICEF, the Scandinavian countries and Canada, a fully equipped field hospital had been set up at Monrovia which was significantly increasing the provision of health services in the area. Furthermore, Sweden had recently announced that it would contribute an additional $3 million to maintain the operation of the hospital. Liberia also expressed appreciation to the many non-governmental organizations operating in its territory and to those donor countries which had contributed food and other assistance. He noted with concern, however, that UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) were the only two United Nations agencies that were fully operational in Liberia, and that the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) maintained only a nominal presence. It was to be hoped that, in view of the urgency of the crisis and the privations which the Liberian people continued to suffer, emergency measures would be adopted to redress the situation.

83. Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka) commended UNICEF on its untiring efforts to alleviate the suffering of the world's children and to ensure their protection and well-being; one of the Fund's primary tasks had always been to enhance child health and nutrition. The various illnesses which had taken the lives of approximately five million children each year and disabled millions more were being controlled by the many vigorous programmes which UNICEF had implemented.

84. There was a close correlation between the policies and programmes of UNICEF and those being implemented by Sri Lanka in order to promote health care, education, and the welfare and development of children. The National Poverty Alleviation Programme or Janasaviya, which encouraged people to become active partners in national development, contained specific measures to improve the lives of women and children. Various other schemes were being implemented in the country, including child immunization, free meals for schoolchildren, the free distribution of a special nutrient, a plan for destitute children, and so on. The existence of free health services had contributed to the great success of the child immunization programme. Through

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that programme, Sri Lanka had been able in 1989 to achieve the goal of universal child immunization which had been set for 1990, and its infant mortality rate was currently one of the lowest in the world.

85. The year 1990 had undoubtedly been a turning-point for the world's children; its major events had included the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Conference on Education for All held at Jomtien, Thailand, the issuance of the report on children and the environment and the historic World Summit for Children, which had adopted the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration in the 1990s. Sri Lanka had recently signed those two documents and the procedure for the ratification of the Convention had just been completed.

86. In summarizing the historic events of 1990, the Executive Director had proposed the creation of a global movement for children, similar to the movements against slavery, colonialism and racism and for equality between men and women. The Sri Lankan delegation supported that initiative and called upon all concerned to unite in a vast alliance on behalf of the rights of children.

87. His Government was fully aware of the importance of the role of women in development. The Women's Bureau under the Minister of State for Women's Affairs was the national focal point for coordinating activities in that area and channelling foreign assistance to projects on behalf of women. A number of non-governmental organizations were also carrying out programmes to improve the status of women. With reference to the progress report on achievements made in the implementation of UNICEF policy on women (E/ICEF/1991/L.5), he noted with satisfaction that UNICEF was proposing various measures to enhance awareness of gender issues and responsiveness to those issues in its programmes.

88. Sri Lanka expressed deep appreciation to UNICEF for having allocated $2 million to it for the period 1991-1993 in order to enable the country to expand its programmes, and for having provided financial assistance to improve health and social services for women and children in the plantation sector. His Government, which was firmly committed to social development in that sector, was implementing various programmes in the fields of primary health care and education.

89. It was to be hoped that UNICEF, which played a key role within the United Nations system with regard to activities to improve the lot of women and children, would continue to collaborate closely with other United Nations agencies working towards that same goal. For its part, Sri Lanka assured UNICEF of its fullest cooperation in all the Fund's future endeavours.

90. Mr. MANSARAY (Sierra Leone) said that his country, as a member of the Executive Board, was overwhelmed by a feeling of pride at the success of events such as the World Summit for Children and the entry into force of the

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Convention on the Rights of the Child, and of many other activities undertaken by UNICEF on behalf of children. As a net beneficiary of the Fund's programmes, Sierra Leone also saw those events and the Bamako Initiative as a source of renewed hope for the majority of its people. He hoped, therefore, that at the current session, the Board would take bold decisions which would strengthen the capacity of UNICEF to translate those hopes into reality.

91. The cooperation programmes which UNICEF had implemented in Sierra Leone had achieved remarkable success, mainly as a result of ingenious programming techniques and highly efficient delivery methods. In 1986, when the most recent five-year cooperation programme had been launched, the infant mortality rate of 200 per 1,000 live births had been one of the highest in the world. One of the programme's main objectives had been to find a solution to that problem. As a result, the figure had dropped to 153 per 1,000, and the new cooperation programme for 1991-1995 was intended to reduce the rate to 96 per 1,000 by 1995. There had been equally significant reductions in the under-five mortality rate and the maternal mortality rate. Child immunization coverage had reached 75 per cent in 1990, in contrast to 6 per cent in 1985. In order to ensure the durability of those achievements, UNICEF had created a support structure based on the promotion of self-sustaining primary health care facilities, water and sanitation, women in development and basic education. The new cooperation programme would at least consolidate the previous achievements and reaffirm the commitment of UNICEF and the donor community to enhancing the welfare of children and women.

92. The network of primary health units that had been created in the country was now largely managed and financed by the communities they served. Between 1983 and 1989, UNICEF had provided financial and technical support for the construction of approximately 1,000 improved wells that had ensured the supply of clean water to hundreds of thousands of rural children, drastically reducing deaths from diarrhoeal and related diseases.

93. His delegation welcomed the Executive Director's invitation to the Board to offer specific comments on the follow-up to the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children; the need to restructure bilateral donor/recipient cooperation, particularly in the light of the fact that only 3 per cent of bilateral ODA went to primary health care, primary education, and rural water supply and sanitation; and the intention of UNICEF to continue to advocate more forceful debt-relief measures and to promote debt relief for children and implement social investment schemes.

94. In the context of that new thinking, it was necessary to highlight the contradictions inherent in a development philosophy that extolled the primacy of human resource development and environmental protection but diminished donor assistance for the attainment of those objectives. More fundamentally, it was necessary to question the viability of "structural adjustment" as the sole model for bilateral cooperation.

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95. The implementation of structural adjustment programmes in many African countries had led directly to the undermining of public institutions, as well as the depletion of human resources, so that highly qualified public servants were forced to emigrate in search of decent wages. His delegation therefore implored UNICEF to use its enormous prestige to bring those concerns to the attention of the donor community.

96. Sierra Leone fully endorsed UNICEF's engagement in the international debt debate. There was a direct link between UNICEF's role in that area and the major concessions announced recently by a group of Swiss banks with regard to the developing countries' commercial debt. Indeed, it was clear that the international debt crisis had had direct and significant responsibility for the deterioration of the condition of children in debt-distressed developing countries.

97. His delegation had studied seriously the budget proposals submitted to the Board by UNICEF. In general it supported them, particularly those dealing with strengthening UNICEF's capacity at headquarters, basing its position on a rational assessment of the expanded mandate of the organization dictated by last year's Board decisions, the World Declaration and Plan of Action, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the continued economic and social crises in recipient countries. It had also studied the ACABQ report on the budget proposals. It found the report extremely useful and intended to use the guidelines and advice it offered judiciously.

98. Mr. NDANGA NDINGA (Cameroon) said that that session of the Executive Board was being held at a particularly critical time in the evolution of the world economy, a time marked by an unprecedented recession that was affecting women and children in developing countries in particular. In Africa, the session was aggravated by environmental damage.

99. UNICEF was making praiseworthy efforts to help Cameroon improve protection of mothers and children. Its programme of cooperation dealt mainly with primary health care, drinking water supply and sanitation, the advancement of women and the strengthening of community and family services, the overall objective being to improve the people's living conditions.

100. In the field of health, the principal causes of infantile mortality were sicknesses that could be prevented by vaccination, first among them tetanus and measles, which were responsible for a third of child deaths, followed by malaria, diarrhoeal diseases and respiratory infections resulting from a harsh environment and poor hygiene. The plight of mothers was still of concern, since the maternal mortality rate in 1989 was estimated at 420 deaths for each 100,000 confinements. The underlying causes of the mortality were haemorrhages, anaemia (generally due to malnutrition), infections and obstetrical accidents. In rural areas, ignorance and the lack of medical help were the indirect causes.

(Mr. Ndanga Ndinga, Cameroon)

101. In education, the illiteracy rate among women remained very high in spite of the Government's energetic measures: it was 71 per cent among women over 15. There was also a very high drop-out rate among girls (75 per cent). With regard to sanitation, only 31 per cent of households had access to drinking water and 50 per cent had reasonably good lavatories; clearly, hygiene remained deplorable.

102. The analysis showed that the main problems faced by women and children were the high incidence of disease and death, insufficient access to drinking water, the low level of education among women and the high drop-out rate among girls. As part of its development policy, the Cameroon Government was trying to find solutions to those problems, particularly through measures relating to health, water and sanitation, education, and the advancement of women. Those efforts had however for some time been seriously hindered by the effects of the economic crisis and the socio-economic constraints of the programme of structural adjustment.

103. He reaffirmed Cameroon's attachment to the objectives of the strategies adopted by UNICEF for the 1990s, which inspired the work of the World Summit for Children. Through its active participation in that Summit, Cameroon had reaffirmed its support for all initiatives taken by the international community for the survival, protection and development of children throughout the world. It had signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and begun the ratification procedure. It had also subscribed to the Declaration and the Plan of Action arrived at during the Summit. Cameroon was currently studying the possibility of developing a national action plan to fulfil the commitment it had made.

104. The expanded programme on immunization implemented in Cameroon had shown real results. With the help of various countries and UNICEF, additional efforts had been made and had enabled half the country's provinces to achieve a vaccination coverage of nearly 75 per cent, though other provinces had relatively low coverage (25 per cent on average). Therefore, efforts would have to be stepped up throughout the country to ensure that the improvement was lasting and to enable provinces whose performance had been less good to reach the stated goals.

105. With respect to integrated primary health care, Cameroon had developed a national reorientation policy in line with the Bamako Initiative and was implementing it progressively in several provinces thanks to bilateral and multilateral aid.

106. In basic education, Cameroon had taken an active part in the work of the World Conference on Education for All held at Jomtien. Cameroon had already organized a national round-table discussion on that subject in order to give effect to the resolutions adopted at that Conference; it had resulted in the adoption of a declaration of general basic education policy and of a 10-year action plan for 1991-2000.

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107. The education of women was an important part of the Government's efforts to assist the populations targeted by UNICEF. Two fundamental aspects of the question should be raised: the formal aspect, having to do with studying why girls drop out of school and how they could be made to stay; and the informal aspect, having to do with the effort to educate women about their health, their children's health and their families' welfare.

108. To reduce infantile mortality by half, to promote the development of the child, to improve the status of women, to preserve the environment, to ensure basic education for all and to mobilize communities in a joint development effort: such were the goals underlying the Cameroon/UNICEF cooperation programme for 1991-1995.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.